No. 6

Dissertation on Bilious Remittent Fever

by

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Bilious Remittent Fever

This disease seems to be more or less prevalent in every section of our Country By Remittent Fever is understood a fever attended with a succession of paroxysms and between each paroxysm there are evident remissions.

Its remote or predisposing causes are Marsh effluvia arising from stagnant Water, or putrefaction of vegetable matter; heat and moisture seems to be also a remote cause also an argillaceous soil covered with wood. — The exciting or occasional cause is exposure to Night air or any excess in exercise, eating, or drinking

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and in fact, whatever is calculated to enervate the system. Agreeable to the doct=rine taught in this School as well as in many others, the proximate cause is "Spes Morbus" or the disease itself, the above enumerated causes have their first impr=ession on the Primae Viae. the disease being seated in the stomach is communi=cated, by sympathy, to every part of the system, the circulatory system is first effected and Fever is the consequence: hence the great importance of paying particular attention to this organ in health and disease. Caldwell's remarks are here appropriate, where, speaking of the stomach, he observes, when the stomach is too powerfully acted upon, its healthful harmony with the other parts of the Body is for a time destroyed, it no longer exte=nds to them its natural and invigorating

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sympathies. The centre of the confederacy being disordered, sickness and debility cannot fail to pervade the whole.
The key stone of the arch being shattered and loosened the entire structure is weakened and in danger of falling to pieces.
Diagnosis the season of the year. The disease being prevalent, the sallow complexion furred tongue, the gastric irritation all show the nature of the disease. -
Prognosis ~~This~~ fever is always attended with more or less danger, the shorter and more obscure the remissions, the greater the danger to be apprehended; when the paroxysms are short and remissions considerable without any tendency to delirium or any other very distressing symptoms the danger is comparatively small.
The symptoms showing the approach of Death are great prostration of strength.

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irregularity of the pulse and voluntary motion, coldness and shrinking of the extremities, vomiting of bilious matter, hiccough and involuntary discharge of faeces, the eyes set, heavy with the dilatation or contraction of the pupils, the tongue dry and furred the respiration difficult and laborious with cold wrists and warm hands. —

The symptoms showing a happy termination are the pulse becoming regular and soft, the tongue clean and moist, the urine depositing a sediment, the eyes instead of being dull and languid become brilliant and lively, the whole surface covered with a gentle perspiration. —

Bilious Fever is more violent and makes its attack much more frequently in the months of August. September and October than any other months of the Year, probably owing to their being a greater

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quantity of vitiated effluvia in these Months than in any others, and probably by this season of the Year, the system becomes much more relaxed and more susceptible to Disease. The symptoms are very numerous, and varied; sometimes commencing with great violence and at other times with mildness. This fever comes on with lassitude, frequent yawning and sighing, with a disinclination to move; now, there is a sensation of coldness, alternated with heat, there is a pain in the head back and loins, now reaction becomes considerable, the skin dry, the tongue and fauces dry, with difficult respiration attended with great restlessness and, if there is a determination to the head, delirium will ensue, the eyes are suffused with tears, and the adnata of a Yellow Colour, the pulse is accelerated beating from one

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hundred to one hundred and thirty in a minute, the stomach is irritable with nausea and vomiting the countenance is dull, and the eyes languid: after these symptoms continuing for sometime, a gentle moisture breaks out on the surface and the patient experiences temporary relief but it is not long before he is seized with another paroxysm: when the fever comes on without any degree of coldness it is much more violent, the paroxysms are much longer and remissions shorter, where there is a considerable coldness amounting to chill=iness, it puts on more the appearance of intermittent fever, and the paroxysms are shorter and remissions longer and more compleat, as the fever advances the symptoms are aggravated, and on the third day, if there is not a crisis, the cold stage seldom appears. It is easy to know

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when the paroxysm is coming on by a dry cough which is quite distressing to the patient and continues until the commencement of the remission but not so distressing as when it first commences: it moderates gradually as reaction takes place; the cough arises from a constricted state of the lungs and always declines as the fever rises.

In Bilious Fever there are frequent occurrences of the bowels becoming torpid and almost unable to act on Medicine, partly from the remote causes on the stomach and partly from an accumulation of bile in this organ and the duodenum; and if not obviated will soon terminate fatally. This fever runs through its course in severe cases in six or eight days, but in more mild cases it continues for fifteen or twenty days. Treatment. I shall first commence the treatment with blood letting,

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it is a remedy which should be resorted to with extreme caution, for by venesection at an improper time or when the symptoms do not demand it we endanger life. Bleeding under such circumstances is very apt to change the nature of the fever producing great prostration of strength and putting on the typhoid type; the system in bilious fever is always benefited or injured by venesection; and by neglecting this remedy when reaction prevails to a considerable degree we deprive the patient of one of the best of remedies, and endanger his life. Where the symptoms demand it blood should be freely drawn from the arm, making the age, the strength, and habits with the pulse, our criterion. The symptoms demanding venesection are a determination of the blood to the head, or any other important organ, as the stomach, the bowels

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and the liver, with the pulse full quick and hard: if one bleeding does not reduce reaction it should be repeated: Where there is a determination to the head blood should be drawn topically by means of the scarificator, Cups, and Leeches. Cold applications will frequently afford relief, but when this remedy fails the head should be shaved and Cold applications reapplied: this failing, blood should be drawn from the Temples by fifteen or twenty Leeches, and if this fails to relieve the patient a blister should be applied to the scalp and there suffered to remain twenty four hours; sometimes in consequence of ~~the~~ a blister of the head, strangury is produced and is to be relieved by diluent drinks.

Of all the means of extracting blood locally I prefer Leeches; with fifteen or twenty we may be able to draw any amount, we wish, which is less painful and terrifying to the

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patient, and more simple in form which should always be preferred by the practition-er. Having premised blood letting when the symptoms demand it the next step proper to be pursued is to give an emetic.

These are sovereign remedies; they very frequently relieve the patient independent of any other medicine, more particularly in the commencement of the disease, they not only cleanse the primæ viæ but leave a permanent effect on that organ, they also exert a powerful influence on the capillaries, by means of which a perspiration is produced and fever recedes. Of all the Emetic articles, Tartarized Antimony is entitled to our highest confidence, as its effect remains long after the exhibition of the medicine and have in an eminent degree a specific power, in this Fever six or eight grains should be dissol-ved in a cup full of warm water and be taken

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in broken doses until vomiting is induced then its operation should be promoted with warm water or Camomile tea until the stomach is completely evacuated.

The next step to be pursued is to open the alimentary canal, this is to be done by purgatives, this class is perhaps superior to any other in the Materiae Medicae: there are a great variety of diseases which arise from a torpor or inactive state of the bowels and are only to be cured by purgative medicines. —

It is of the greatest importance to pay particular attention to the alimentary canal, for without this we must always fail in the cure of bilious Fever. As an individual purge the mild Muriate of Mercury is far superior but perhaps it would be better combined with other purgatives as Salap. Scammony and Rhubarb. &c. After the bowels have been cleared of the bile with their feculent contents

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sudorific medicines should be administered which very frequently puts an end to the Disease. There have been a great many preparations of Antimony in use such as the golden sulphate of Antimony James's powder but the simple tartarized Antimony is superior to any of them; it should be given in small doses, so as not to nauseate the stomach as nausea has been proved detrimental in Fevers. Where the skin is dry and hot, the pulse strong and hurried I have seen the sweet spirits of nitre administered with the happiest effect given in a dose of forty drops every half hour the pulse becomes less hurried and more soft the respiration easier and a gentle moisture breaks out all over the surface of the Body with a remission if not a solution of the Disease - The acetate of Ammonia is a valuable sudorific and also the carbonate

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of ammonia has been given with happy effect.
The cold bath is amongst our most valuable
remedies when cautiously administered after
the alimentary canal has been evacuated,
it seldom fails to put a speedy end to the
Fever more particularly at the commencem
=ent of the disease. The precautions to be
observed are never to resort to the remedy
until the paroxysm has nearly reached its
height and when there is no perspiration or
any tendency to diaphoresis when the pulse
is full and strong the skin dry and parched
with ~~the~~ sensation of burning on the surface
the respiration laborious the tongue and fauces
dry: resorted to at this period it always gives
temporary relief if ~~it~~ does not put a
final solution to the disease. After admi
=nistering the remedy the patient falls imp
=erceptibly into a refreshing slumber, the respir
ation becomes easy the skin moist and relaxed

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the tongue and fauces moist with an abate-
ment of all the symptoms. The modes of
administering the cold bath are various but
the form I have been accustomed to is to
strip the patient of all his body linen
and pour the water on by pailsfull until
the patient feels a sensation of chilliness
then he should be wrapped up in a warm
blanket and warm cordial drinks given
him, there is an immediate determination
to the surface with a copious perspiration
. Of the good effects of the cold bath I am
confident having during the last summer
seen upwards of two hundred cases of
bilious remittent fever and on at least
one hundred the remedy in question adm-
inistered with the happiest effect.
Where the disease is advanced and the patient
much exhausted abluvion should be prefered
but in this state either only proves palliative

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In the last stage of fever spongeing the patient with vinegar or Brandy and Water affords great relief; where all the above remedies fail and the disease still progresses the best practice is to give Calomel and Ipecacuanha combined in small doses until the disease either goes way or gentle ptyalism is produced which never fails to interrupt the progress of the Fever. sometimes the Fever puts on the Typhoid type and is kept up by debility under such circumstances stimulants should be freely administered as Opium. laudanum volatile alkali Aether Brandy with rubefacients In the sinking stage of Fever blisters are of great importance notwithstanding it has been disputed by medical men.—

It is the custom of many Physicians in the South to commence the treatment of bilious Fever by giving twenty five grains of Calomel and then administering it in small doses

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until the Fever recedes or ptyalism is induced which for the most part proves successful if there is no tendency to inflammation, but the indiscriminate use of Calomel is a bad practice, for Calomel in small doses is a stimulant and given, when inflammation is present, never fails to destroy the patient. Even admitting it was always successful I should be opposed to the practice for very frequently the mercurial disease is much more painful and distressing than the Fever which it was given to cure, I have seen the whole cheek slough off and at other times callous openings through it for life.
Notwithstanding all this, the mercurial practice under certain circumstances and timely administered proves very beneficial. When there is percieved the least intermission the Peruvian Bark should be administered in as large quantities as the stomach

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will admit, making the stomach our guide respecting the dose and quantity. If the Fever should recur the Bark should be discontinued until the next intermission. There is one thing here to be recollected that if the system is not prepared for the Bark, it never fails to be detrimental, finding this to be the case the bowels should be purged with Calomel and James's powder every day or every other day until the fur leaves the tongue and at this period the system will be prepared to recieve the Bark with benefit. Wine is a valuable remedy and may be allowed with the Peruvian Bark. Sometimes the stomach refuses to take the Bark in substance and under such circumstances it should be given in decoction. If it refuses the decoction, it should be given combined with some Bitter or Aromatic &c Sometimes one form will be

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quite disgusting when another may be very agreeable. The sulphate of Quinine promises to be a very valuable remedy as the dose in quantity is small and the stomach is enabled under any circumstances to take it with ease. The patients diet should be light and nourishing he should eat frequently and a little at a time his exercise should be moderate increasing it gradually as he regains his strength